

Thirty-five years ago, our Nation codified an enhanced commitment to protecting and improving the quality of water in our lakes, rivers, streams, estuaries and wetlands by enacting the Clean Water Act. That 1972 legislation spelled out ambitious programs for water quality improvement that have since been expanded and are implemented today by industries and municipalities.

Why is this law important? Clean water is a natural resource of tremendous value to the Nation, essential to protect public health, fisheries, wildlife, and watersheds and to ensure abundant opportunities for public recreation and economic development. In Southern Maryland, where we are surrounded by water, it is a law of great significance.

Since the enactment of the Clean Water Act, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has provided **wastewater assistance to states and local governments**; prevented the discharge of approximately 700 billion pounds per year of pollutants; and, has helped significantly increase the access to safe drinking water.

Last week, the U.S. House unanimously approved a resolution recognizing the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Clean Water Act. The resolution celebrates the progress made since the passage of the landmark legislation, yet acknowledges the critical challenges addressing water quality that persist today.

In Maryland, we are all too familiar with the struggles to improve water quality in our efforts to restore and protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Despite federal clean water regulations and investments in wastewater programs that have

made some headway in reducing pollution discharge into the Bay, conditions are far from meeting the goals laid out by the Chesapeake Bay Agreement of 2000.

One remaining cause of these problems is diffuse runoff into our waterways - typically from farmland, impervious surfaces, and yards - known as nonpoint source pollution, which today accounts for 50 percent of the nation's remaining water pollution problems.

Another leading reason is our nation's decaying water infrastructure. Indeed, according to a report issued this year by the EPA, 'without continued improvements in wastewater treatment infrastructure, future population growth will erode away many of the Clean Water Act achievements.'

In confronting this challenge, I am proud that the new House Majority has taken some important steps toward addressing our nation's clean water needs. Earlier this year, the House approved three critical bills that will significantly help state and local governments across the country and in Maryland address persisting water quality issues.

One bill authorizes funding for one of the most effective water quality programs available to states and municipalities - the

Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund. The fund is the primary source of federal funding for clean water, helping to provide low-interest loans to local communities for construction of sewage treatment facilities and other water pollution abatement projects. In 2007, Maryland received more than \$26 million from this fund.

**In addition, the House has passed a Federal Farm Bill** that is seen as going a long way toward addressing water quality problems in the Chesapeake Bay.

Overall, the bill invests more than \$212 million in direct funding to help our farmers in their continued efforts to be good stewards of the Bay. This includes \$150 million for targeted nutrient reduction and sediment control in rivers such as the Patuxent and Potomac to improve water quality, and restore and enhance wildlife.

Additional funds will be used for a pilot program to help agriculture producers in the watershed find cost-effective strategies to address the resource needs of their farms, while helping to meet key environmental goals. These investments are incredibly significant as increased Farm Bill support is critical if the region is to meet its goal of cleaning up the Chesapeake by 2010, a job expected to cost billions of dollars.

Clean, safe water is absolutely indispensable to the good health of all Americans - as well as our way of life and our continued prosperity. On the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Clean Water Act, let us recommit ourselves to upholding the intent of this landmark legislation, and rededicate our efforts to helping cities and communities keep our water clean and safe today and for future generations.